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INFO RUEHZA/WHA CENTRAL AMERICAN COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RUMIAAA/USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL PRIORITY
RHEHAAA/THE WHITE HOUSE WASHDC PRIORITY
RHMFIUU/HOMELAND SECURITY CENTER WASHDC PRIORITY

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SUBJECT: HONDURAN FOREIGN MINISTER MILTON JIMENEZ REMAINS
IN POSITION DESPITE DRUNK DRIVING ARREST

¶1. (U) Despite press reports to the contrary, Honduran Foreign Minister Milton Jimenez remains in his position according to a diplomatic note sent to the Embassy and other foreign missions accredited to Honduras on January 4, 2008. The press initially reported that President Manuel "Mel" Zelaya had accepted an "irrevocable" resignation from his Foreign Minister. According to the President's private secretary, Raul Valladares, the resignation followed the

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Foreign Minister's drunk driving arrest on December 30, 2007. It was even rumored in the press that Jimenez would take over for Enrique Flores Lanza as Legal Advisor to the President. A small crowd of political activists, protesting on behalf of Jimenez at the Foreign Affairs Ministry, increased in size in front of the Presidential Palace and may have influenced the President to keep Jimenez in his current position.

¶2. (SBU) Jimenez was arrested in the early morning hours of December 30, for drunk driving in Tegucigalpa and was taken to police headquarters where he scuffled with police. A police video of a portion of the fight appeared on YouTube.com and was played on local TV in which the Foreign Minister physically attacked an officer before he was subdued. According to Minister of Security Alvaro Romero, Jimenez tried to conceal his identity during the initial arrest. Jimenez admitted his poor conduct in a press conference on January 3 but complained that the police were abusive and non-democratic. He then appeared on the evening news with a black eye and showed bruises on both arms. The press knew about the Foreign Minister's arrest but did not report it until the video appeared on the internet.

¶3. (SBU) Post suspects that President Zelaya may have encouraged the protestors in order to have an excuse to keep Jimenez as Foreign Minister for now. The President is expected to announce changes to his cabinet on January 7, as he already had requested provisional resignations from all his cabinet members in November 2007.
WILLIARD